

faced with difficult choices over health care reform and how to set priorities for health care spending. The Hastings Center has conducted an international study on the goals of medicine and the executive summary of the resulting report is included in this section. The report starts from the premise that it is the ends of medicine not only the means used to reach these ends that are at stake: "too often it seems taken for granted that the goals of medicine are well understood and self-evident, needing only sensible implementation. Our conviction, however, is that a fresh examination of those goals is now necessary". The report identifies and defends four main goals that medicine should aim to achieve: the prevention of disease and injury and the maintenance of health; the relief of pain and suffering; the care and cure of those with a malady, and the avoidance of a premature death, and the pursuit of a peaceful death. They argue that such a clarification of the goals of medicine is imperative as without such reflection, "the various reform efforts going on throughout the world may fail altogether or not achieve their full potential". This report and the articles included in this section are a useful consideration of the often neglected area of public health ethics and include the important article by Daniels and Sabin. Last chance therapies and managed care. The second edition also includes a new section on the cloning of human beings. This includes a useful summary of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission's report on human cloning and responses to this by James Childress, a member of commission, and Susan Wolf on why the NBAC is wrong. In terms of the discussions of health policy this collection is predominately concerned with the USA, but this does not detract from its wider usefulness as the principles and the moral underpinnings of such policies are extensively debated.

It is always useful to be able to direct students to collections of original articles that they might not otherwise have access to and this collection gathers together pieces by some of the best-known authors writing on ethics today. At the end of each article the editors have included some questions for consideration and these will be helpful for both teachers and study groups, as they can form the basis of discussion and enable students to critically evaluate the articles. The collection will be useful for students seeking a broad introduction to the subject and researchers who might not have subscribed to the *Hastings Center Report* over the years. It will be a valuable addition to university libraries, especially those who do not subscribe to the journal itself!

L Frith

Practical Nursing Philosophy: the Universal Ethical Code

D Seedhouse. John Wiley & Sons, 2000, £16.99, pp 222. ISBN NO: 0-471-49012-1

This book is clearly written and well laid out. The short summary at the beginning of each chapter is a useful guide to the reader and also serves as a valuable summary of key issues for revision purposes. The author offers a number of case scenarios for the reader to work

through and provides many practical examples of situation analysis and possible steps to ethical decision making. Seedhouse accurately claims that in nursing, as elsewhere, philosophical analysis is useful in helping to clarify ideas. Unfortunately, as he also accurately points out, to date much that has been described as nursing philosophy has not in fact led to the clarification of ideas but rather to a greater mystification.

The author poses two significant challenges to nursing through the pages of his book: (i) use some of the tools of analytical philosophy to reconceptualise concepts central to nursing practice, and (ii) take a lead in developing a more humane approach to health care ethics.

Chapters two to five deal with the first of these two challenges. They offer a significant and necessary challenge to nursing academics and practitioners alike. Seedhouse accurately points to the many examples of inadequate conceptualisation of the so-called core concepts of nursing. He also makes lots of mileage out of what he refers to as nursing big ideas. I have to admit to being almost entirely in sympathy with the author's self appointed task. I suggest that of the four chapters considering concepts that have gained nurse academics' favour as being "central" to nursing, Seedhouse most successfully deals with the notion of advocacy; and the nurse as potential patient advocate. Seedhouse's analysis is one of the most comprehensive I have come across.

In terms of his second challenge regarding leading the way in a more humane approach to health care ethics, the author also provides interesting insights into some of the tensions, inconsistencies, and incompatibilities in nursing, particularly in mental health nursing. Seedhouse raises some important questions for practitioners to consider. For example, he asks if it is possible to promote the mental health of patients within the current structures of mental health service delivery—and if so how? Is it possible to balance care and control? In their defence, some practitioners might argue that Seedhouse has a somewhat antiquated view of the mental health service and indeed of mental health nursing.

The least compelling section of this interesting book is the final chapter. Two difficulties emerge here. Firstly, the focus on the individual practitioner, and his or her perception of the ethical, belies the significant influence of organisational structure and culture on accurate perception of the ethical. It also, by default, ignores the impact of professional socialisation. Secondly, while it may be accurate to suggest that "Ethics is a pervasive phenomenon of human life—every human action that can affect one or more of us has ethical content", it is not very helpful. The usual difficulty remains: perceiving and forming judgments regarding those actions or situations where there is *significant* ethical content. I suggest that the failure to do the latter may either trivialise the moral domain of clinical practice or lead to a state of moral paralysis in the thoughtful practitioner.

None the less this is a useful introductory text that offers effective conceptual analysis of a number of important concepts in nursing. Seedhouse also raises some significant questions regarding the function and purpose of nurses and nursing practice.

P Anne Scott

Interests in Abortion: a New Perspective on Foetal Potential and the Abortion Debate

T Martin. Avebury, 2000, £40.00, pp 113. ISBN 0-7546-1146-9

This is an interesting attempt to tackle that most emotional of all subjects—the abortion debate. Taking as her basis Tooley's well known discussion on abortion, Martin sets out to provide an account of the intrinsic morality of abortion which, she says, takes a moderate approach to the subject. Unlike many writers on this subject, there is nothing obviously partisan about Martin's approach. The book is written in a somewhat dense manner, but this may simply reflect the complexity of the issue itself.

Unusually, Martin seeks to use evidence about fetal pain as one plank of her argument that even in early pregnancy terminations, account should be taken of evidence which suggests that fetuses can experience pain. Moreover, as part of the continuum of development, she argues that there are circumstances in which it is not intrinsically wrong to terminate a pregnancy. She concludes that after 24 weeks the fetus is possessed of certain characteristics which render it equivalent to the person to be born, thus justifying restrictions on abortion, save in rare and extreme cases.

This is a thoughtful and interesting contribution to the debate.

S McLean

NOTICES

MSc in Global Ethics

A new course, the MSc in Global Ethics, begins in October 2002 at the Centre for the Study of Global Ethics, University of Birmingham.

It will include modules on global ethics, global bioethics, human rights, globalisation and governance, conflict resolution, NGOs in a changing international context, and research methods.

A placement in an NGO or comparable organisation will also be available.

Short courses and weekend courses in global bioethics, human rights, and development ethics are also available.

For further information please contact: Helen Harris: +44 (0)121 693 4687.

Between Technology and Humanity: the Impact of New Technologies on Health Care Ethics

A conference entitled Between Technology and Humanity: the Impact of New Technologies on Health Care Ethics, organised by Caritas Vlaanderen, Brussels, Belgium, in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine, Catholic University of Leuven, will be held from 18–19 October 2002 in Brussels.

For further information: tel: + 32 2507 01 11; fax: + 32 2512 01 18; email: post@caritas.be